

**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)	
)	
Federal-State Joint Board on)	CC Docket No. 96-45
Universal Service)	
_____)	

**COMMENTS OF THE
UNITED STATES TELECOM ASSOCIATION
IN SUPPORT OF
VERIZON'S REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF TIME
TO FILE REPLY COMMENTS**

The United States Telecom Association (USTA),¹ through the undersigned, files these comments in support of the request made by the Verizon telephone companies (Verizon) for the Federal Communications Commission (Commission) to grant a two-week extension of the due date for filing reply comments² on the *Recommended Decision*³ of the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service in the above-referenced proceeding.

As Verizon notes in its Request for Extension, granting the request would permit reply comments to be filed on January 17, 2003 instead of January 3, 2003. In addition to Verizon, USTA has heard from other USTA members that an extension of time, consistent with that requested by Verizon, would provide them with the additional time needed to adequately review and respond to the anticipated substantial number of comments that will be filed in this matter. USTA also agrees with Verizon that parties filing reply comments will need to draw upon the expertise of personnel who will be unavailable during the intervening holidays between the due dates for comments and reply comments and that an extension would allow such parties to access

¹ USTA is the Nation's oldest trade organization for the local exchange carrier industry. USTA's carrier members provide a full array of voice, data and video services over wireline and wireless networks.

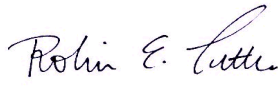
² See *Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service*, CC Docket No. 96-45, Request for Extension of Time to File Reply Comments (Dec. 12, 2002) (Request for Extension).

the expertise of such personnel. Finally, USTA agrees with Verizon that the *Recommended Decision* raises complex issues and that the grant of a two-week extension would not prejudice any parties, rather it would provide them with adequate time to address in detail the issues raised in the *Recommended Decision*, which will provide the Commission with a better record for its decision.

USTA urges the Commission to extend the due date for reply comments on the *Recommended Decision* until January 17, 2003.

Respectfully submitted,

UNITED STATES TELECOM ASSOCIATION

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³ See *Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service*, CC Docket No. 96-45, Recommended Decision, FCC 02J-2 (rel. Oct. 16, 2002) (*Recommended Decision*); Public Notice, DA 02-2976 (rel. Nov. 5, 2002).